

FORTUNE

Seven Ways to Enjoy White (Wine) After Labor Day

BY RACHEL KING



Friends toasting at a dinner party. GETTY IMAGES

Like white clothes, white wine is typically phased out after Labor Day. (Meanwhile, some of us will never wear white shoes again after watching the '90s classic *Serial Mom*, but I digress.)

In the United States, Labor Day usually marks the unofficial end of summer—even if temperatures will continue to soar in many parts of the country until Halloween these days. But the shift—at least in mindset, if not in season—also usually sees a decline in sales for white wine.

“As the hearty, complex dishes of the colder months are set out on the fire, the prevailing wisdom is to put the round peg into the round hole and reach for a hearty, complex red,” observes Andreas Pejovic, the general manager and beverage director at Corrida, an upscale Spanish-inspired steakhouse in Boulder, Colo. “When it’s apple and pear season, it’s time for White Burgundy, Riesling, and Slovenian skin-contact wines (a friend of duck, pork, and fowl). When the citrus stocks start to hit, give me a Pinot Grigio from just about anywhere, or an Albarino or Verdejo from the Iberian Peninsula to provide the stabilizing forces you need with any meal that has salt, fat, acid, or heat.”

But in the age of canned wine, mocktails, and chilled red wines during summer, many rules of wine are ready to be broken.

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“Well, I think the general thought is that since white wines are usually lighter, they’ll be the better choice when the weather’s warmer,” says David Osenbach, an advanced level sommelier and the wine director at Providence, an innovative fine-dining destination in Los Angeles. “They’re also ‘generally’ lower in alcohol than reds—although I could name plenty of whites over 14.5% ABV and plenty of reds lower than that.”

Regardless, Osenbach says white wines are great throughout the year: “Just because it’s cold out doesn’t mean that you can’t enjoy them.” He advises to look for something richer and rounder than just the light and crisp whites; look a bottle with less acidity and a touch of sweetness to pair with cooler temperatures.

“Fall is the perfect season for enjoying those white wines showing richness and complexity, and usually not the first choice for the summer thirst,” says Mariarosa Tartaglione, wine director at the acclaimed restaurant Ai Fiori in New York City. “Many classic fall ingredients—such as squash, potatoes, mushrooms, and kale—are perfectly paired with full-body whites, with longer aging time, more mature structure and more intricate aromatics.”

Candace Olsen, the head sommelier at Charlie Palmer’s New American restaurant Aureole in New York City, advises that the best white wines should be served between 46–50 degrees Fahrenheit.

For an exquisite old vintage white Burgundy, I would tend toward the 50 degree—or even cellar temp—as the full bouquet, delicious orchard fruits, mushroom, and umami qualities are unleashed and bouncing out of the glass when the wine is served warmer,” Olsen says.

Here are a sampling of some great blancs and biancos that are not just summer whites, but anytime wines.



2016 Chateau Montelena Chardonnay: From the Napa Valley winery that put California Chardonnay on the map at the 1976 Judgement of Paris, there might not be a finer white wine at a relatively affordable price point than this. Expect aromas of honeysuckle, jasmine, and apple blossom along with wispy notes of vanilla and lemon balm. Green apple, candied orange peel, and baking spices anchor the flavors. The contrast between silky toast and sweet pear highlights a bright acidity and a rich finish that will become more supple and dynamic with age.

“Sunshine is probably the number one pairing for this wine,” says Chateau Montelena winemaker Matt Crafton. “And while it’s delicious cold, allowing it to warm a bit in your glass will reveal the incredible aromatics and complexity that make this wine so captivating.”